

NATURAL LAW,

AS

Automatic Mind or Unconscious Intelligence.

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BY

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"If the Divine Idea will not retire at the bidding of our speculative science, but retains its place, it is natural to ask, what is its relation to the series of so-called Forces in the world?"—JAMES MARTINEAU.

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By Natural Law we simply mean the order in which things invariably follow one another, without reference to the cause of why they do so, or why they do so invariably. With respect to the cause there has always been a great difference of opinion. That this sequence is invariable is held by scientists to be all we know, and that we know nothing about the cause or why it is so; that is held to be beyond the limits of our knowledge.

Again, is there any necessary connection between these sequences, between cause and effect? This has been answered, Yes, by one school; No, by another of equal authority. We have no means of knowing, say others, neither can we tell whether such causation is universal.

Again, whence do we get the idea of Causation; how is it formed in our minds? By experience, say some; by habit, by intuition, say others, but these are the same things only a little farther removed from each other. Habit is repeated experience, and intuition is habit organised and transmitted. But there is another school, to which belong

Locke, Mill, and Mansel, who say that our idea of cause arises from analogy to our own voluntary actions. The generality of mankind expect the sun to rise from habit, few go so far as experience, that is, that it will do so because it always has done so, and fewer still ask what Power it is that makes it do so. But when we come to reason upon this "power" or cause, the only idea we have of it is the use we ourselves make of it in our own voluntary actions.

The Persistence and Correlation of Force is the great discovery of the nineteenth century, and yet no sooner has it been made manifest that Force is as real, as measurable, as indestructible as matter, than all classes of both mental and physical philosophers are in a hurry to bury it again; and that which is proclaimed to be indestructible is nevertheless said to be no entity. The physicist finds only "motion," the psychologist "free will," and both Materialist and Spiritualist equally find matter and spirit acting spontaneously. No cause or force is required for the production either of motion or volition; and the fact that there is such a thing as force, and that each manifestation of it can be interpreted only as the effect of some antecedent force, is practically ignored. The Materialist says, force or power is simply an innate principle or attribute of matter, or rather it is the physical motion itself, and the notion, or rather feeling, that power is a something distinct from matter, is an illusion, and the idea that matter would be inert except for something else pushing it behind, or carrying it along, is absurd. Thus the active principle, the cause of all change, is supposed to be inherent in matter itself, the same as psychologists affirm the active principle to be inherent in mind itself. The one party wishes to get rid of the invisible or spiritual principle in matter, the other to do without cause for volition, or what becomes of free will, and the interests of morality supposed to be based upon it!

Now how is it after the discovery of force and its indestructibility that Philosophers of all schools are thus so well able to do without it? This is owing to the imperfection of language and the want of definition, the term "Force" indicating a mere abstraction, having no real existence, but standing for the ability or power of the agent of which it is the force. But as motion is inseparable from the thing moving, so is force from this agent. Matter is supposed to be this universal agent by one school, mind by another, but both matter and mind are forms only of this agent, whatever it may be. Like everything else it is unknown to us in its own nature; objectively it is invisible, and known to us only as a mode of motion; subjectively, as Will power, that is, as a sense of effort when we voluntarily overcome resistance. Matter is concentrated force or centres of force; molecules and atoms are imaginary creations invented to express certain relations of quantity of forces to each other. As Huxley says, "Every form is force visible; a form at rest is a balance of forces; a form undergoing change is the predominance of one over others." This predominance of one over others is caused by more force being added, which change or mode of motion continues till the additional force passes on to something else. Nothing can give out more force than it has received; when that is expended it is inert or dead till it has been re-charged. In a row of ivory balls force is put in at one end and passing through each it comes out, undiminished in quantity, at the other end. Force is put into a watch, by compressing a spring, it works all the machinery till it is expended, and then the watch stops. It is the same with the human body; its "organic units" each of which has its own proper attributes, are supplied with force; when that is given out to the new matter, they are dead, and require to be carried out as so much waste. What we call matter never generates force, it only conditions

it, that is, determines its mode of action ; and every existing state has necessarily grown out of the preceding, each manifestation of force being the effect of some antecedent force, and thus, as Oerstead says, "Everything that exists depends upon the past, prepares the future, and is related to the whole."

Force, by which we must always understand the Unknown Agent of which it is the force, passing through the brain becomes conscious ; it then loses its characteristic as a mode of motion, until, under what we call the power of the Will, it resumes its action as physical force and becomes again unconscious.

This consciousness is all we really know—to know a thing and to be conscious of it being the same thing. Hume says, "We may observe that it is universally allowed by philosophers, and is, besides, pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions or impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion. . . . It is impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our ideas out of ourselves as much as possible ; let us chase our imaginations to the heavens, or to the utmost limit of the universe, we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can perceive any kind of existence but those perceptions which have appeared in that narrow compass."

This would appear to be the merest truism, yet no one *practically* believes it. It appears to be one of those axioms which, as Hume says, admits of no answer, and produces no conviction. We know only thoughts, not things, and of those thoughts we know only that they are our thoughts ; we know nothing of their real nature or essence. All arguments, therefore, based upon an assumed essential difference between matter and spirit, between the material

and the immaterial, are only so much idle talk ; we know nothing of such differences, we know only of difference in their modes of manifestation.

Herbert Spencer says, "That a unit of feeling has nothing in common with a unit of motion becomes more than ever manifest when we bring the two into juxtaposition." What a unit of motion may be, as motion is inseparable from the thing moving, I do not know ; but whatever it may be, we can perceive no other kind of existence but our own perceptions, how then can the two be brought into juxtaposition ? Again, we are told that the latest results of scientific inquiry, whether in the region of objective psychology, or in that of molecular physics, leave the gulf between mind and matter quite as wide as it was judged to be in the time of Descartes. It still remains as true as then, that between that of which the differential attribute is Thought, and that of which the differential attribute is Extension, there can be nothing like identity or similarity ; the fence that divides them has never been broken down, and until the inseparable distinction between subject and object, between the conscious and the unconscious, can be transcended, it can never be broken down : ("Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy," by Mr. Fiske, p. 445.) Knowing only Mind or our own Perceptions, how do we know that there is any gulf between Mind and Matter ? Motion and Extension are only known to us as modes of thought. But what is this distinction between the unconscious object and the conscious subject ? "The sum of our knowledge of the connection between mind and body," says Sir. Wm. Hamilton, "is that the mental modifications are dependent upon certain corporeal conditions, but of the nature of these conditions we know nothing." Fiske tells us, with reference to these conditions, that "the physical action which accompanies physical changes is an undulatory displacement of molecules,

resulting in myriads of little waves or pulses of movement." Under this action of the brain, force—of which all unconscious objects are composed—passes from the unconscious into the conscious state. I know that this is denied. It is said that an unfailing parallelism between the manifestations of the two is all that has yet been established. It is true Herbert Spencer says, "that no idea or feeling arises, save as the result of some physical force expended in producing it, is fast becoming a common-place in science." But both he and all others at present confine this expenditure of force to the production of the abovementioned corporeal condition, while I maintain that if consciousness tells us anything, it is that under these conditions a great part of the force received into the body with the food passes from unconscious into conscious force, from what is called matter to mind, from the object to the subject—proving, in fact, what our later philosophers, with Spinoza, have asserted, that there is but one comprehensive ultimate substance, of whatever nature it may be, and which we may call Mind, Conscious, or Automatic.

Sensibility or Feeling, then, is a correlation or transformation of force. That the gulf between physical and mental force has hitherto been pronounced unpassable is owing to the altogether arbitrary distinction that has been set up between them. The medium through which physical force becomes conscious force is the brain and nervous system; the specific character of thought and feeling—that is, the varying consciousness—from the monad to man depending upon the complexity and perfection of its structure. Each animal thus has its own ideas or feelings, and a world of its own, created in its own brain, in which it plays its part. The food supplies a certain amount of force to the body, estimated, whether correctly or not I do not know, at fourteen million foot pounds daily in a full grown man.

This force works the whole machinery of mind and body, and our sensibility, that is, our ideas and feelings, are strong and vivid in proportion to the amount of force expended in producing them. The force that thus passes into feeling is no longer known to us indirectly as a mode of motion, but directly as consciousness. That our physical force is so used up in feeling is evident to us in a thousand ways in the direct relationship between mind and body. Let a person watch himself carefully, and he will soon discover, notwithstanding that the brain is a great reservoir of "potential" power, that in proportion as he expends his strength elsewhere he has the less for thinking or feeling. We cannot think to any purpose when the force is required for digestion; and the best cure for love or any strong feeling is a thirty miles walk. Cripples who can expend little muscular or mechanical force often display great powers of mind. Had Sir Walter Scott not been lame in his youth we should probably have lost all the fruits of his wonderful genius. If we lose one of our senses it increases the power or sensibility of the others. This is not merely from increased action of the brain, but that a larger amount of force is supplied to it for transformation into feeling. This is supplied by the blood, and an instrument has been invented by which the relative quantity supplied to the brain may be measured. A portion of the arm is inclosed in a vessel, and as that portion of the arm is expanded or contracted, the amount of blood supplied to other parts of the body is measured by the rise or fall of a barometric column. When a person was asleep there was most blood in the arm, and the least when the mind was most active, so that the amount required for any strong thought or feeling was correctly measured. To say, then, that a mere "unfailing parallelism" between the action of the brain and consciousness is all that has yet been established, is disproved by all facts, for

what is called physical force, through the instrumentality of the varied nervous systems of animals, is constantly passing into mental force, and back again to physical force, throughout the whole world. Let those who affirm this mere parallelism tell us where consciousness, which is the mental *force* of thought and feeling, comes from. The customary reply is, oh! it is the Soul which thinks. Granted, but if so, where does the Soul come from? and out of what is it made? and why is every attribute of its thought and feeling dependent entirely upon the body? The answer to this, from my point of view, is simple. As physical and mental force pass so readily into each other it is a fair inference that like all other forces they are forms only of the same entity, and that there can be no mutual influence where there is no common property—* and that mind, therefore, only can produce mind, that all force is mind conscious or automatic, and that the Soul is that portion of Universal Mind which plays such varied tunes

* "Is, then, the transmigration of forces altogether an illusion? By no means, but before one can exchange with another, *both must be there*; and to turn their equivalence into a universal formula, *all must be there*. With only one kind of elementary matter, there can be no chemistry; with only the chemical elements and their laws, no life; with only vital resources, as in the vegetable world, no beginning of mind. But let Thought and Will with their conditions once be there, and they will appropriate vital power; as life, once in possession, will ply the alembics and the test-tubes of its organic laboratory; and chemical affinity is no sooner on the field than it plays its game among the cohesions of simple gravitation. Hence it is impossible to work the theory of Evolution upwards from the bottom. If all force is to be conceived as one, its type must be looked for in the highest and all-comprehending term; and Mind must be conceived as there, and as divesting itself of some specialty at each step of its descent to a lower stratum of law, till represented at the base under the guise of simple dynamics."—"The Place of Mind in Nature and Intuition in Man" (REV. JAMES MARTINEAU).

as it passes through the equally varied organisms that are its instruments. Mr. G. H. Lewes tells us that motion—not Force—and feeling are identical, and he devotes the last fifty pages of his “Problems of Life and Mind” to the elucidation of this supposed fact. But how can Motion be anything? It is the mere transference of a body from one point in space to another; it is a mere abstraction inseparable from the thing moving, and surely Mr. Lewes does not mean that the brain moving and thought are the same thing? But that is what he says: thus “the neural process (the brain in motion) and the feeling are one and the same thing viewed under different aspects. Viewed from the physical or objective side, it is a neural process; viewed from the psychological or subjective side, it is a sentient process” (Vol. 2, p. 459). “Motion is a mode of Feeling.” (p. 456) . . . “The phenomenon known objectively as a nervous tremor, a neural process involving very complex elements of molecular energy, does not become a feeling in the sentient organism; it is that feeling in the organism, and is the occasion of a quite different feeling in the observer” (*Idem*, p. 488). Again he says, “So far as knowledge reaches, the forces at work in consciousness are the forces at work in the organism; and the forces at work in the organisms are the same in kind as those in the Cosmos.” So far it will be seen I quite agree with him, but he adds: “there, as here, Force is nothing but *mass acceleration*.” Thus we are to infer that “mass acceleration,” i.e. matter in motion and feeling are the same thing. Mr. Lewes is determined to exclude the agent which is the cause of mass acceleration, and, consequently, he is obliged to make our “perceptions” the only kind of existence we can ever know as identical with Motion, which is *nothing*, or with the

brain in motion, *i.e.*, mass acceleration. And yet Mr. Lewes, having got rid of Force as mass acceleration, immediately after reinstates it in its proper place as molecular energy. Thus he says, "A stream of molecular energy flows through the organism from the great cosmic force, and returns to the ocean whence it came" (p. 462). This is precisely what I have been asserting, only by "molecular energy" I mean the stream of force that sets the brain in motion, and by that force I mean the Unknown Agent of which it is the force or from which the force is derived. Animal bodies

"Are but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each, and God of all."—COLERIDGE.

Mr. Lewes says, "We may now condense the various arguments of this chapter in a single statement—Existence—the Absolute—is known to us in Feeling, which in its most abstract expression is change, external and internal. The external changes are symbolized as "Motion, &c." (*Idem*, 502). Now, if Mr. Lewes will allow us to substitute for change or motion, which is nothing but an abstraction, this agent or cause of change—and that is evidently what he means—I can agree with him entirely. He says truly, "There is no real break in the continuity of existence; all its modes are but differentiations. We cannot suppose the physical organism and its functions to be other than integral parts of the cosmos from which it is formally differentiated; nor can we suppose the psychical organism and its functions to be other than integral parts of this physical organism from which it is ideally separated" (*Idem*, p. 503). The law of the Persistence of Force or Continuity of Energy shows that it is the same force which, passing through different organisms, assumes different

"forms" under these new conditions, and that this force is part of the general Cosmic force although thus differentiated to serve a specific purpose. And, as Mr. Lewes says, "This unification of all the modes of Existence, by no means obliterates the distinction of modes, nor the necessity of understanding the special characters of each. Mind remains Mind, and is essentially opposed to Matter, in spite of their identity in the Absolute; just as Pain is not Pleasure, nor Colour either Heat or Taste, in spite of their identity in Feeling. The logical distinctions represent real differentiations, but not distinct existents. If we recognize the One in the Many, we do not thereby refuse to admit the Many in the One" (*Idem*, p. 504).

We can only judge of Mind from our own very limited experience as it presents itself in our consciousness. We find there that conscious acts of volition, frequently repeated, pass into the automatic or unconscious state. The same mental power is displayed, and the same effects produced unconsciously as consciously, and this appears to be effected by the structure or body with which we always find Mind in connection. It is illustrated in our walking, talking, eating, and playing upon an instrument, every motion of which originally required a distinct conscious volition. If this can take place in the very short period of our existence, it is reasonable to suppose that all unconscious action may have originated in the same way; that all power is Will power. Our only knowledge of power is that which we ourselves exercise when we overcome resistance by the action of what we call Will. Matter consists of innumerable atomic forces acting each in its own special way, attractive or repellent. Each is striving or making efforts like our own Wills, and each individual atomic action was originally, most probably, a conscious act of volition. These atomic forces, by a series of combinations and adjustments, have passed into the

Order of Nature, from conscious to unconscious action, so that we have now all the effect of intelligence acting unconsciously; and this unconscious intelligence is more intelligent in the growth of plants and animals than the conscious intelligence anywhere known to us. It may be said that we have no more right to assume that all force is mental than that it is physical, particularly as it is from the physical power that the mental seems to arise. But how does it so arise? It is only from every atom from the first acting from conscious intelligence that this result is attained. It is mind throughout that produces what we call mind, physical force being automatic mind; for, as we have seen, "unless among your primordial elements you scatter the germs of Mind as well as the inferior elements, the evolution can never be wrought out:" (Lotze's *Microcosmos*.) The intelligence of man is the highest *conscious* intelligence with which we are familiar, but he could not make his own body; where each part now acts unconsciously towards the ultimate objects of his being—the production of the largest amount of pleasurable sensibility. This body has probably taken millions of years to make, part being added to part on the principle of evolution, but each part originally existing separately and acting consciously. If we now consciously attended only to the action of the heart, there would be little else that the mind could do. But all that is done for us, leaving the mind free for higher purposes, consciousness only returning when something is going wrong in the machinery, and interference is necessary. And so it may be in nature; in the progress from the monad to the man evolution and natural selection are yet unable to account for all that has taken place, and no doubt the "missing links" are supplied by the action of conscious power and intelligence. Of the nature of this intelligence, and of its mode of action, we can know little or nothing, we can only judge faintly by analogy.

Man's body, which is a Universe in itself, acts unconsciously to release the high powers of sensibility, viz., of thinking and feeling. The body of the Universe acts unconsciously, in what we call Natural Law, to produce the largest amount of pleasurable sensibility. The connection between cause and effect, in which we see nothing but invariable sequence, is one of purpose, to produce this effect. Originally each cause and effect was a conscious action of power; in the ages it has passed into the automatic. All power is Will power. As motion is inseparable from the thing moving, so is force or power from the agent of which it is the power, and this Source of all Power we have called God. All things are produced directly, although not consciously by Him, for power cannot be delegated or separated from its source. As Spinoza says: "He is the universal Being of which all things are the manifestations." If all things partake of the nature of Mind, and space or extension is a form of thought—a thought not being a yard long and a foot thick—then as the World exists in thought in our mind, the Universe may exist in the mind of God, and may have no other existence; and so Force also is One; in this sense we may conceive of God as a Personality.

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the Soul."

But while Soul and Body are One and indivisible—all we see is but the Nature of God, and what we call laws of Nature are attributes of Deity. "Every *thing* is a mode of God's attribute of extension; every *thought*, wish, or feeling, a mode of His attribute of Thought" (Spinoza). The Universe or Body acts as our body does, automatically, in the order which we call Natural Law, while the Soul is the essence of pleasurable sensibility, which we call Happiness, for I think, with Bishop Butler, "that it is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind, or any creature (or Crea-

tor), but happiness." The force out of which this happiness is created centres only in God, He is the Divine Source of it all, and truly and literally "in Him we live and move, and have our being." Man, contemplating himself as an individual, necessarily fails to understand the mysteries of his being. *Cogito, ergo sum*, is a delusion. The "Ego" is a mere form of thought, like space and time: all that we know is that thinking is. The universal Force, which resumes its consciousness, thinks in me. Thought and feeling, and the happiness of which it forms part, is not individual, but universal. Thus Fichte, whose *Ego* is no individual *Ego*, but the universal world-*Ego* come to consciousness, recognises this view, and consequently he would not say, I think, but it thinks—the universal world-process of thought thinks in me. We are units only of the great aggregate of Sensibility of which God's being is composed, in which the aggregate of happiness is so great that all pain or evil are obliterated. It is only when we have "laid the meddling senses all asleep" and the force is withdrawn from bodily action

"That with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."

When we feel with Shelley that

"The awful shadow of some unseen power
Floats tho' unseen among us;"

And with Thompson that

"All is but the varied God.
From seeming evil still educing good,
And, better thence again, and better still,
In infinite progression."